

Congressman Also Reacts to President Obama's Remarks on Arizona Anti-Immigrant Measure and Immigration Reform

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Media Contact: Douglas Rivlin (202) 225-8203

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(Chicago)— U.S. Representative Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) announced that he would travel to Phoenix, Arizona to join immigrant and Latino leaders at a rally at the State Capitol on Sunday. He also reacted today to remarks delivered by the President of the United States at a Rose Garden naturalization ceremony where 24 immigrant servicemen and women were sworn in as U.S. citizens. The President addressed the Arizona state legislative measure (SB 1070) that Gov. Jan Brewer will either veto, sign, or allow to become law by Saturday afternoon and the President addressed comprehensive immigration reform. The following is a statement from Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez.

We held a [press conference](#) this week at the U.S. Capitol, with my colleague from Arizona Rep. Raul Grijalva, calling the nation's attention to the serious civil rights catastrophe that Republicans in Arizona are unleashing on immigrants and all Latinos in the state. Now the national spotlight is focused squarely on Arizona and people from all over the country are making their way to Phoenix to stand up with and stand up for immigrants and Latinos in the state.

I am going there to let the people of Arizona know that they are not alone in fighting against bigotry and hatred and thousands will join me this weekend at the State Capitol. I have not seen the Latino community nationwide react in such a forceful way to an attack on immigrants since 2006, just after House Republicans passed a measure to criminalize and deport all undocumented immigrants and their families. It is remarkable how citizens and non-citizens, faith leaders, labor unions, and community-based groups from across the country have responded to the call to help defend the people of Arizona from the short-sighted political stunts of their own legislature playing election year politics with people's lives and families.

The President is clearly concerned about the situation in Arizona, the legality of the measure before the Governor, and I welcome the President's call for the federal government to monitor the law enforcement and civil rights conduct in Arizona very, very closely.

If there is any silver lining to all this, the legislative overreach by Arizona Republicans to inject harsh anti-immigrant politics into the brewing Election Year stew is focusing the President's attention on the need for the federal government to take charge and the urgent need for him to use his office to make something happen on immigration reform in Congress this year.

I am encouraged by what we have seen and heard from Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Harry Reid, Dick Durbin, the Senior Senator from my home state, and others and I think we will have a serious debate on immigration reform in the Senate in the coming weeks. I know that if the Senate acts decisively and passes a bill, we can also pass a good bill in the House. As Senator Durbin says about the issues competing for time on the agenda, we can find the time to do important things and this is important.

I am also heartened to see courageous supporters of sensible immigration policy in the Republican Party coming forward, like Sen. Dick Lugar of Indiana who stood up with Senator Durbin in calling for a halt to deportations of immigrant students. We need more leaders in the Republican Party to come forward and work with us to enact reform. I will be reaching out to House Republicans to begin laying the groundwork for the debate when it comes to our side of the Hill, as I expect it will later this year.

This is the area that the President can be most helpful in: making the case to the nation and to lawmakers on the other side of the aisle that we need action now to address immigration, to cut-off illegal immigration, and promote border security and we need the President to roll up his sleeves and do it.

The President is right -- I fully agree that inaction at the federal level has created a vacuum and wrong-headed ideas and political opportunists have rushed in to fill it. Arizona Republicans have kicked a hornet's nest on immigration and it will come back to sting them.

I call on all justice loving Americans to join us in Phoenix. Join us in denouncing this law, join us in calling for its veto, and join us in standing up against hatred when people paint all immigrants

and all Latinos as criminals. In so doing, we will be living by a fundamental truth articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We need to take a stand.

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